

# DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES? 100' of Defensible Space

*For residents like you that live in areas like the Pinelands, the threat to life and property from wildfire is a real concern. Studies show that a fast moving wildfire can destroy a home in only ten minutes. So, take an active role in protecting your home and community from wildfire, and reduce the threat to life and property.*



*Homes require the creation of defensible space.*

## Defending Your Home

Some positive physical changes you can make to your home include:

- Using fire-resistant roofing and siding materials
- Enclosing spaces under porches & decks
- Replacing mulch with decorative stone
- Using non-resinous or less flammable plants
- Pruning trees & shrubs to remove dead and dying plant life
- Reducing the density and changing the arrangement of landscaping

## Understanding the Problem

Creating defensible space now is critical to wildfire protection in New Jersey, more so than in the past; and it is a result of explosive development, which places homes within rural landscapes. Lack of adequate space between your home and flammable forest vegetation, especially in areas with frequent fire history, like the Pinelands region, could be devastating in the event of a major wildfire.

As residential communities and developments continue to spread into new, previously undisturbed natural areas, the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is created. New Jersey residents that live within the WUI, should consider the importance of creating defensible space. The closer a home is to the trees, shrubs and other potentially flammable fuels of the forest, the more easily a wildfire can spread and impact their home.

### Wildland Urban Interface

*The line, area or zone where structures and other human development meet with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.*

### Defensible Space

*The area around a home or structure that is modified in order to protect it from damage by a wildfire. It is also needed to provide safe areas for firefighters to work.*

**DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?**

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## To Create or Not To Create?

Residents that actively take steps to manage and maintain their property benefit directly by reducing their risk of loss from wildfire. One of the first steps you can take is to create defensible space around structures.

Some factors you should consider include the:

- Age and type of building materials used currently on the structure
- Plant species as well as their arrangement, health, and density
- Identification and location of flammable materials
- Location of available water sources

## Communities Working Together

Many large developments use lots sized one acre or less. This is smaller than required to create adequate defensible space. Thus, there is a shared community benefit in developing defensible space for groups of homes, streets within developments, or entire communities.

It is also important for the community to understand the need for creating defensible space.

- Identify and create multiple evacuation routes
- Mark driveways and make them accessible to large emergency vehicles
- Clearly mark house numbers so they are visible from the street

If your neighborhood or community members can work together on their own properties, everyone will reduce the possibility of wildfire damage. The potential for wildfire spread, evacuation, and infrastructure damage is also reduced.

## For Your Community

- Maintain forest health by monitoring for insects and disease and applying appropriate corrective measures
- Apply measures such as prescribed burning or mowing to reduce understory fuels
- Create firebreaks where needed

One hundred feet is all that may be needed to protect your home from wildfire. The Forest Fire Service wants residents to know that creating defensible space is critical to protecting your home and community.

One hundred feet is the recommended optimum defensible space. If you don't have 100 feet, consider your property line your area of defensible space.

### Fuels

*Fuels are anything that can burn. Fuel load is a term used to describe the amount and types of fuels present. Ladder fuels are materials that can enable a ground fire to climb into the tree canopy and increase wildfire spread and intensity. Ladder fuels include; low dead branches, dead shrubs, briars, brambles, vines, and/or dead wood on the ground.*



# ***100' of Defensible Space***



***This Ocean County community survived a wildfire...would yours?***



***This Pinelands home also survived a wildfire. It has what it takes: 100' of defensible space.***

# Defensible Space Checklist

## GENERAL

- ☐ Ensure house numbers/driveways are visible from the roadway
- ☐ Your property's driveway must be 16 feet wide to allow emergency vehicle access
- ☐ Use fire-resistant roofing and siding when building or remodeling
- ☐ Enclose the underside of decks, porches, and foundations
- ☐ Clean gutters & roof surfaces of leaves/debris in the spring and fall
- ☐ Inspect chimney/fireplace flue
- ☐ Develop a water supply (100' garden hose on exterior outlet)
- ☐ Keep a shovel, rake, and hose readily available and in good condition
- ☐ Stack firewood 30 feet away from house
- ☐ Have an approved spark arrestor/heavy wire screen on fireplace
- ☐ Screen/cover openings in roof, attics, and floors
- ☐ Keep flammables in safety cans

## PLANTS

- ☐ Space plants to minimize contact with structures and each other
- ☐ Remove dead plants and prune out all dead material from living plants

- ☐ Maintain healthy plants by watering and pruning out dead wood
- ☐ Use non-resinous, well-watered landscape plants (No evergreens/laurel/rhododendrons)

## LANDSCAPING

- ☐ Mow & water lawns
- ☐ Keep grasses to a maximum of six to eight inches in height
- ☐ Choose stone instead of wood mulch
- ☐ Remove tree branches/dead limbs within 10 feet of chimney/house
- ☐ Remove all dead wood in trees and low hanging branches
- ☐ Prune large shrubs and trees so there are at least 10 feet between their crowns/canopies
- ☐ Remove ladder fuels, such as low branches, vines, and shrubs from contact with larger trees

## AND ALWAYS REMEMBER TO...

- ☐ Plan alternate escape routes if an evacuation is necessary
- ☐ Designate a safe location where your family may gather
- ☐ Report any suspicious activity or suspected arson by calling 911 or your local Forest Firewarden

## For More Information Contact:

### Northern New Jersey Division A Headquarters

NJ Forest Fire Service  
240 Main Street  
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(973) 786-6350

### Southern New Jersey Division C Headquarters

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### Central New Jersey Division B Headquarters

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### State Headquarters NJ Forest Fire Service

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